

Wisconsin, in late August 2003. Purple loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*) is a highly invasive, nonnative plant that forms dense stands that restrict native wetland plants and reduce habitat for waterfowl. The workshop was designed to foster interagency partnerships with Great Lakes national parks to integrate research information with hands-on survey and control methods, and to provide education and outreach tools to teachers and volunteers.

“Two research projects were established in 2003 at Indiana Dunes, Pictured Rocks, and Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshores.”

Speakers represented a wide range of agencies and organizations and presented information from the perspectives of federal, state, and local concerns. Workshop participants also represented a broad range of stakeholders, including resource managers, interpreters, educators, researchers from nonprofit organizations, businesses, and concerned citizens. Many of the participants enthusiastically volunteered to assist with a USGS purple loosestrife monitoring project and Wisconsin’s biological control program. Workshop evaluations showed that people appreciated the interaction of speakers and participants from diverse areas, the flow of ideas among groups, the exploration of communication issues on purple loosestrife control,

and the opportunity to become involved in hands-on scientific research. The workshop was rated excellent or above average by 92% of the participants.

From facilitating research projects to hosting the purple loosestrife workshop, the GLREC has begun to fulfill its role as a field station for collaborative research and educational activities. In the years ahead it will continue to attract researchers to address a multitude of management issues facing Great Lakes parks and assist with development of related educational outreach programs. ■

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NPSFACT

Funding for natural resource management and research in the national parks more than doubled over the last 10 years, **from \$87.0 million in FY 1994 to \$191.0 million in FY 2003**. This dramatic increase includes \$67.4 million as a result of the Natural Resource Challenge. As a percentage of the budget for the operation of the National Park System (ONPS), natural resource management and research funding rose from **10.4% to 12.2%** over this period.

From guests to researchers: The adaptive reuse of McGraw Ranch

By Judy Visty

Research learning centers of the National Park Service combine the elements of field stations, partnerships, active support of research, and information transfer to fulfill the mandate of the Natural Resource Challenge. In September 2003, the Continental Divide Research Learning Center inaugurated its year-round residential campus located at the historic McGraw Ranch (photo) in Rocky Mountain National Park (Colorado).

A main focus of the research learning centers is to reuse existing facilities to provide expanded bed, office, and lab space for scientists and educators. In 1988, when the park acquired the McGraw Ranch property, it intended to raze the buildings and restore the land to elk and bighorn sheep habitat. A new superintendent at the time, Randy Jones, and a statewide outcry from preservationists led to a partnership with the National Trust for Historic Preservation. Fee demonstration funds, Colorado’s State Historical Fund, and donations



Visiting researchers to Rocky Mountain National Park are now able to bunk, prepare food, and use office facilities at the refurbished McGraw Ranch, the residential campus of the Continental Divide Research Learning Center.

from the National Trust, Rocky Mountain National Park Associates, and private individuals paid for the \$2 million project, which was completed in 2003.

Adding bunk beds may seem like an odd way to instigate government reform, but beds for visiting researchers are a key to ensuring their willingness and ability to come to parks to

do research. Most visiting researchers cannot afford the high temporary housing costs found near many national parks. And camping in a tent for several weeks may sound romantic but has limitations when fieldwork involves long hours, bad weather, and strenuous physical activity. A room with shared kitchen facilities allows a researcher to have a dry place to write up notes, eat, and get a good night’s sleep before going out and doing it all over again. The “field station” environment at McGraw Ranch also fosters information exchange with other scientists and park staff.

Further information on the Continental Divide Research Learning Center is available on the Web at <http://www.nps.gov/romo/education/CDRLC/index.html> or from the author (judy_visty@nps.gov, 970-586-1302). ■

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